THE GAME FOWL!

BY

F. H. AYRES.

HARTFORD:
MERCANTILE PRINTING HOUSE, 245 MAIN STREET.
1878.

WHITE GEORGIAN GAMES.

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GAME FOWL,

Its Origin and History,

WITH

RULES FOR MATING, REARING, AND TRAINING

FOR THE

Exhibition Room or the Pit.

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PREFACE.

In offering this little book to the public we hope to present, in as condensed a form as possible, the main facts about that noble fowl, the American Game.

Without pretending to enunciate any very startling novelties, in the treatment of the subject we have aimed to present the facts about mating, breeding, handling and training for the pit; together with the rules which govern the conduct of mains in the greater part of the United States. In doing this we have taken pains to state each fact clearly and briefly, without needless verbosity. How far we have succeded we leave it for the reader to judge.

The Game Fowl.

THE wild jungle fowl, as the progenitor of all the feathered stock yclept poultry, was long considered entitled to the credit of producing the crowning glory of the poultry yard—the true Game.

But the study of antiquarians and naturalists evolved another theory, and Persia was fixed upon as the natal land, and the wild pheasant as the progenitor of our Black Breasted Reds and other favorite varieties.

Still later Mr. Wheeler of Honesdale, Pa., in a letter to Dr. Cooper, broaches a theory which certainly cannot be ante-dated. Mr. M. says: "Now if it be true that there is one spot only, where Games were first brought into exist ence, that spot from the very nature of the case could only be known to the author of Being. For to begin at the beginning, by turning to Holy Writ we find, that the 'fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the firmament of heaven' was created the day before man, *somewhere*, and that after

man had been placed in Eden, the fowl was brought there, or rather the fowls. Without express revelation, man can not tell of events which happened before his creation, and this happened to be the case in regard to Game fowls—they were created before man, according to Holy Writ. We cannot even point to Eden as the ground where Games were first created. The most that authors have been enabled to assert, with any show of accuracy is, that the *oldest accounts* we have, speak of Games as existing at certain times at certain places,— a very vague and unsatisfactory solution of the question at best. For if we take *all* of the 'oldest accounts' (if the contradictory expression may be allowed), we will find that Games have existed from time immemorial, in nearly every known country of any considerable extent, on the face of the globe. . . . . In view of the above train of reasoning or argument, I must come to the result or conclusion, that Game fowls are natives of all soils."

Whatever their origin, whether they can claim India, Persia, or that somewhere, before the Garden of Eden was created, as a birthplace, the fact most interesting to Game breeders of to-day remains the same, that the thoroughbred Game cock of our time stands pre-eminent as the king of all domestic fowls, unapproached and unapproachable.

History Of Games.

Though of but at best fragmentary scraps of description and these by no means absolutely determined, the history of the Game dates back over two thousand years, or, if we accept the speculation that Gomer the son of Japhet was named after the Game cock, even more. In the time of Aristotle they were well known, and during the Roman Empire the breeding and pitting of Games was a custom of long standing.

In England Games have been bred for centuries, and Game breeders, handlers, and feeders were held in high esteem and attached to the retinues of many illustrious characters, during the reigns of Henry Second and Queen Bess.

At this time there were five noted pits in London, where mains were almost constantly being fought, and where the sprigs of nobility and the lowest orders of society might be found cheek-by-jowl; all considerations of rank sunk in a common absorbing interest. It was at this period that what are now called strains began to be recognized. From this point the Earl O'Derby and many celebrated varieties named after their titled owners, came into prominence, and the breeding of Games to a standard was commenced, though, as yet, the idea of breeding to a feather was in abeyance and the only requisite was the ability to stand the steel.

Hence when once a successful cross was found, no matter what the plumage, it was bred "in-and-in" and culled simply by the test of the pit.

When cock-fighting was more prevalent, in the palmy days of the Southern "bloods," immense numbers of cross bred and pure fowls were reared and fought yearly, and large sums of money changed hands on the results.

A natural sequence of this crossing was the production of great numbers of varieties (or rather strains) suited for cocking purposes, and named after some famous handler, breeder, or perchance the original sire. It was at this time Dr. Cooper, the well known breeder and cocker, published his work on Games, in which we find enumerated sixty-one pure bred strains and thirty-two "approved crosses."

That the present Standard recognizes but twelve varieties is a signficant hint of how many of Dr. Cooper's "pure-bred" Games stood the test of breeding to feather, and produced their like with sufficient exactness to admit their classification.

The almost universal legal ban under which cocking labors, has done much to discourage breeding for the pit, but there are still many veterans engaged in the business, and though the mains are fought *sub rosa*, they are not infrequent.

In a later chapter will be found full directions for training, handling and pitting, which will be interesting not only to sportsmen and amateur cockers, but also to the great class of breeders, who, while they never engage in cock-

fighting, breed many birds yearly, which make a good record on the mat.

STANDARD VARIETIES.

At the head of the twelve varieties known to the Standard is the noble Black Breasted Red Game, the legitimate successor of the original Earl O'Derby. and by many considered identical with that bird. But a careful research leads us to think that, though no one doubts the close relationship, the identity of the varieties is at least doubtful. Conspicuous among the differences in marking are the white feet, beak and toes which mark the original Earl O'Derby and form a striking contrast to the willow legs, toes and beak of the Black Breasted Red. In saying this remember, we speak of the original Earl strain, not of the fowls now known by that name, which are simply Black Breasted Reds, and are known indifferently by both names.

Black Breasted Reds reproduce themselves very exactly and thus prove themselves in the truest sense of the word "thoroughbred," so that we must look a long way back, to find the connecting link between the Earl O'Derby of to-day and the original owner of the name, though we do not deny that the link exists. Link or no link, the Black Red is able to stand on its own merits as a hardy, beautifully plumaged bird, an ornament to any poultry yard; and needs no ancestry beyond its record in the show-room and the pit.

Next to the Black, comes the Brown, or as it is frequently called Ginger Red Game, which cannot fail to impress even the most casual observer, with its close relationship to the former. In fact it reminds one forcibly of a toned down Black Red, with a touch of the hen's plumage. This variety are great favorites with cockers, and have proved their pluck and endurance in many a hard-fought battle.

The Duckwing, Yellow or Silver, is a very attractive bird and for show purposes commands as high a price as any variety. At the Connecticut State exhibition in January, 1878, there were on exhibition an imported pair of Duckwings, the property of Messrs. Lincoln & Hellyar, of Worcester, Mass., which cost the modest sum of $300 in gold, and they were worth it to their owners. If like begets like that outlay of $300 will produce its counterpart many times over before the original pair fades from the scene,—even were there no such things as Society premiums.

Next come the White Georgians, originated by Mr. S. J. Bestor, of Hartford, Conn., a very popular style of Game; trim-shaped, bold-looking, cleanly white fowls, and great favorites with all who have ever bred them.

All these, as well as the six other varieties, should be, and generally are "dead game," though the majority of their fanciers prize them more highly for their beautiful plumage and stately ways than for their pugnacity.

For whatever purpose reared, so long as they are cleanly bred and carefully handled, Games—Black Red, Brown, White, or what you will—will always be *the breed* of all

domestic fowls to a large and enthusiastic portion of our best fanciers.

Choice of Breeding Stock.

In selecting breeding stock; whether it be one variety or another, a single rule as inflexible as the laws of the Medes, is sufficient for all cases. Breed from the best. See to it that the cock is well marked, and that he is the descendant of similarly marked fowls, and in his prime—hardy, bold eyed, and jaunty in his bearing. With such a sire mated to clearly marked hens of good pedigree, we can count on strong, hardy and well marked chicks, true to feather, and inheriting the full gaminess of the sire.

Whether the progeny is intended for the pit or the exhibition room, this rule is one which must be carefully observed. Of what use is it to breed from a bird even a little "off" in color or hardness of feather, and expect to rear hard plumaged, well marked chicks. The sire that lacks the full vigor, of which the plumage and general carriage are only the outward exponents, will not only fail in getting a good percentage of chicks from the eggs set, but can not convey to his progeny the passports by which we recognize sterling value. Even should the first generation give a fair portion of first class birds, the lack of vital power is pretty sure to crop out in the second, and may come to the surface years after the prime cause of the taint is dead and forgotten. Pit fowls bred from faulty

parent stock will prove unremunerative property in many ways. Stags will turn black in the face and show signs of premature exhaustion when sparring in training, and with the most careful handling will be troublesome customers to get in really prime condition. Even if they seem well trained and have been fed in the most approved manner, inherited weakness is liable to come out on the mat and cause their backers great mortification and loss.

We do not believe in choosing a quarrelsome cock, or hen as a breeder, in the hope of thereby obtaining extremely pugnacious offspring. True courage, undying, tenacious till death, seldom is accompanied by the petty peevishness that snarls at every trifle. The bravest cock is generally quiet enough as long as he is the acknowledged master of the walk.

Incubation and Rearing Chicks.

After your stock is mated, all progresses smoothly till the hen's litter is laid, and she becomes broody, which is made evident by the signs of a pale comb, ruffled feathers and continuous clucking. When the hen has fairly made up her mind to sit, which is known by her taking possession of some vacant nest, it is best to try her by leaving her to incubate a few days on nest eggs. Then when it is evident that her purpose is fixed, place her, *at night*, on a new nest in a secluded spot. This nest *must be* new, sweet and clean, and filled with clean straw, over which carbolic powder

or tobacco leaves broken fine, have been sprinkled. The bottom of the nest should be a sod, grass side down.

Having prepared the nest and ensconsed the hen within, bide your time till the twenty-first day brings the chicks.

For the first twenty-four hours the hen should be left on the nest and during that time the chicks require no food. as they have sustenance, which was absorbed before they were hatched, and will be none the better for any attempt to feed them. Nature is the best nurse and the less we try to improve on her standard the better we shall succeed. The second day the chicks should be fed on hard boiled eggs chopped fine and crumbled bread. After a day or two of this diet, commence giving cornmeal scalded and mixed to a thick crumbly consistency. Avoid wet food of all descriptions, as you would the plague; nothing will sooner decimate a flock of young fowls of any description. Feed often, as often as four or six times a day, and do it regularly; regular feeding is one of the things it will never pay to slight.

If we cannot attend to the matter personally, we must be sure that it is in the hands of some responsible person who can and will take pains to feed the chicks with the regularity of clock-work. We can hardly lay too much stress on this point, for it is one of vital importance, and too often neglected.

As the chicks develop, and approach the "skinny age" keep them clear of vermin by a plentiful use of sulphur and carbolic powder; house them warmly, and you will have well feathered active cockerels and pullets.

Training for the Pit.

The cock when taken from the walk, though his eye is bright, his plumage trim and hard, is still by no means in condition for pitting, and requires a regular course of feeding and training as much as the boxer, who, while never completely out of form yet needs special preparation for the grand effort of the ring.

As a general rule the cock comes to hand much too fat, and so the first operation, after placing him in a clean coop about three feet square, is to give him a purge. To accomplish this mix some pills of cream tartar and refined nitre, in the proportion of six of the former to one of the latter, the whole cemented together by molasses and hard soap. After mixing divide the paste into pills, about the size of a common "blue pill," and administer a couple of them in the morning. Then put on leather mufflers, and let him exercise with a cock similarly rigged, till he is thoroughly warmed up and begins to show signs of exhaustion. The exercise will bring the medicine into active operation, and the birds should then be warmly housed and left undisturbed till the next day.

Continue the purge and the sparring for three or four days, and then commence to feed oatmeal mush, cooked, wet with milk and sprinkled with Cayenne. Alternate this feed with one of barley and ale, or simply scalded barley. After seven days of this training, add the whites

of hard boiled eggs to their diet, and give them cool barley water to drink. Vary the diet from day to day, giving one day oat-cake and milk and the next scalded barley. At the same time use alternately thin milk and barley water.

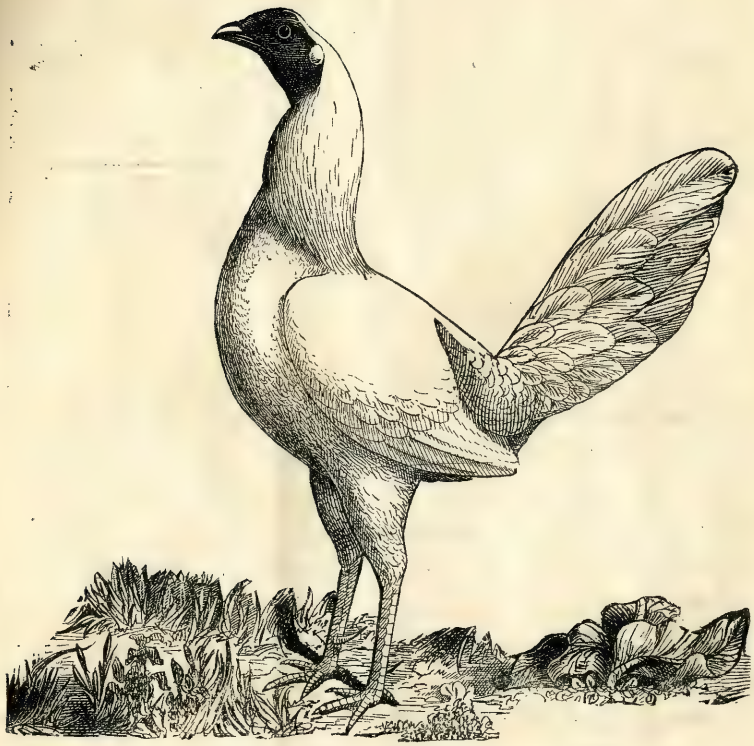
On the day of the main give the cock a light feed of oat-cake and thin milk, and barring accidents your bird will be in fine order and Dead Game. Some writers recommend sparring the cock in training with a dunghill cock, which will give up after a few rounds, but it is a better plan to imitate as nearly as possible the real work of the ring, and give your bird a "foeman worthy of his steel,"—a Game cock in good condition. The athlete does not practice with a man ignorant of the sport, but with one who can give as well as take.

DUBBING.

Game cocks whether intended for the pit or exhibition, must be cleanly dubbed. The lack of care in this operation leaving rough points, unsightly in the exhibition room, and just what the opposing bird in the pit wants for a good bill hold.

The operation of removing the comb, wattles, and ear-lobes requires a firm hand and a true eye, but the knack is easily learned. An expert can perform the operation unaided, but it is preferable to have an assistant to hold the bird, so that the operator may be free to work unhampered.

DUCKWING COCK.



WHITE HENNY COCK.

To remove the wattles and ear-lobe, generally the first operation, let the comb be held firmly, so that no sudden motion can endanger the face, then let the operator holding the wattle in one hand, with a keen pair of shears, shave it off in a line from the lower part of the beak to the deaf ear. Next trim the ear-lobe off smoothly, and then treat the other wattle and ear-lobe in the same way. Do not remove the comb at the same operation, but wait three or four weeks till the wattles and ear-lobes are well healed.

Trimming the Comb.

To complete the dubbing, hold the head firmly by inserting the thumb cross-wise in the opened beak, and placing the fingers on the back of the head. Then make an even close cut from the front of the comb to the back, taking pains to keep the shears close to the head. Trim the fore part close to the beak, and the operation is finished.

After dubbing, the stag should be kept in a separate coop till the comb heals thoroughly, and all danger of picking is over, and then returned to the walk.

Trimming for Battle.

Games are trimmed just before they are pitted, and frequently in the pit itself. The bird is held, with the legs fast between the knees, and his head toward the trimmer's

body. The hackle and neck-feathers are then drawn forward closely over the head, by placing the hand at the base of the hackle and running it to the back of the head. The feathers are then cut off in a smooth line, close to the hand. Next cut off about two and a half inches of the first flight feathers, and wing coverts. The saddle is then trimmed about half away, and the tail docked to a fan shaped stub about four inches high, and the body feathers cut close, from the vent well up toward the breast.

The fowl is now trimmed and the next operation is

HEELING,

or fixing the gaff properly, so that it shall neither be awkward, nor endanger the life of the user. On this subject Dr. Cooper has written so clearly that no recent writer has even attempted to better his description, Dr. Cooper says:

"Let your fowl be held by a competent person; let him be held so that the inside of the leg is perfectly level, then take your thumb and fore-finger, and work the back toe of the fowl: while doing this you will see the leader of the leg rise and fall at the upper joint. You will set the right gaff on a line with the outside of the leader at the upper joint of the leg, and the left gaff you will set on a line with the inside of the leader of the upper joint.

Be careful not to set the gaff too far in, as it would cause the cock to cut himself. As a general rule for a young beginner, he had better set the right gaff on a line with

the outside of the leg opposite the second joint: and the left gaff on a line with the outside of the leader at the upper joint. The beginner can heel in this way until he becomes competent to work according to the first mentioned plan. For if a gaff be set a sixteenth of an inch inside the line of the leader, the fowl will most probably kill himself; and hence the utmost care should be used in placing the gaffs properly.

This rule for gaffing we practiced for thirty years and always conquered with few exceptions, which were not the fault of the gaffing. We have never known fowls to fight thirty blows when gaffed according to this rule, without one or the other being killed. This thing of fowls fighting for a long time without one or the other being killed or cut down, certianly shows bad heeling.

When you are preparing your fowls for the pit, and before you put them in the coop for feeding, have their spurs sawed off. Not too short, but long enough to come through the socket of the gaff, so that the latter can be attached firmly. You will then cover the spur with a damp paper or a very soft buck skin, so as to get the socket of the gaff to fit tightly, and to prevent its turning or shifting. When you have the gaff arranged properly, tie it with good waxends, but not so tightly as to cramp the legs of the fowls."

With the cock thus dubbed, trimmed and heeled we can trust him to the handler, sure that no matter what his success may be, he is at least at no disadvantage through any fault of ours.

Gaffs.

There are a number of gaffs, which are allowed in different parts of the country, but the most commonly approved one consists of a socket, shaped like a thimble with the end cut off, from the lower part of which a smooth round blade rises with an even curve to about the level of the upper part of the socket. This blade is an inch and a quarter long and is pronounced by cockers generally the best for all purposes.

Other gaffs are the Drop Socket, Half Drop, the Western, as well as many others rarely used and little known.

One occasionally finds the old sharp edged and "bayonet" shaped gaff, which has cut down many fine birds, and was at last abandoned on account of its terrible bloodthirstiness. As will be seen by the rules of the New York and Boston clubs, the regulation spur above described, is the only one allowed in most pits, and so we may hope for the speedy extinction of this relic of barbarism. The true gaff, properly handled, will do execution enough to satisfy the sportsman without turning the pit to a shamble.

Rules of the Pit.

While the general rules of fighting a main are essentially the same, those known as the New York and Boston rules differ sufficiently to make a comparison interesting.

In addition to these two, there is another code slightly modified from the English "Red Lion" rules, and known as the Southern rule,—and still other regulations called the Western, Syracuse or Albany. Many other places have separate codes, which vary more or less from those of other states and sections, but the differences are not sufficient to warrant encumbering our pages by a detailed enumeration of them.

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE BOSTON UNION CLUB COCK PIT.

1. All fowls brought to the pit must be weighed and marked down, for those to see that have fowls to fight.

2. Fowls within two ounces are a match.

3. A Stag is allowed four ounces when he fights a cock.

4. A Blinker is allowed four ounces when he fights a sound fowl.

5. Fowls being ready, brought to pit.

6. Each man takes his station, and sets his fowl to right or left, as he pleases, there remains till the fowls are in one another, or in the tan, or on his back.

7. The handler shall not assist his fowl from where he sets him, if he does, he forfeits the battle.

8. In no case shall they handle the fowls, unless they are in one another, or can count ten between fighting.

9. The fowls in hand each man to his station; either

counting ten, the fowls must be set or the delinquent loses the match.

10. The fowls set, either refuses to fight, the last that showed has the count, which is five times ten, and then they are breasted.

11. The fowls are breasted at every five times ten, after once breasted.

12. The fowls brought to the breast, the one that has the count counts five times ten more, and then twenty; then he claims the battle, which is his.

13. In case the fowls show while counting, it destroys the count, and they commence again.

14. In case a fowl is on his back, his handler can turn him over.

15. In all cases the parties can select judges from the company present.

16 In case there are no judges, it will be left to the keeper of the pit.

17. In no case shall any person talk with the handlers while the fowls are fighting.

18. All disorderly persons will be requested to leave the pit immediately.

19. All weighing will be left to a man selected for that purpose.

20. All matches will be fought with round heels, unless otherwise agreed upon.

21. A man known to use any other, unless agreed upon forfeits the battle.

22. All cutters, slashers and twisted heels are barred from this pit.

23. In all cases the fowl that shows fight, has the count.

24. All fowls brought to the pit that do not show fight do not lose the battle; unless otherwise agreed upon.

☞ *Gentlemen are requested not to smoke in this room.*

NEW YORK COCK PIT RULES.

1. The pit shall be circular, at least eighteen feet in diameter, the floor of which shall be covered with carpet or some other suitable material. There shall be a chalk or some other suitable mark, as near as can be to the centre of the pit. There shall also be two outer marks, which shall be one foot each way from the centre mark.

2. The pitters shall each choose one judge, who shall choose a referee. Said judge shall decide all matters in dispute during the pendency of the fight, but, in case of their inability to agree, then it shall be the duty of the referee to decide and his decision shall be final.

3. Chickens shall take their age from the first day of March, and shall be chickens during the following fighting season, to wit — From the first day of March, 1878, to the first day of June 1879.

4. It shall be deemed foul for either of the respective

pitters to pit a fowl or chicken with what is termed a foul hackle -- that is, any of the feathers left whole on the neck.

5. The pitters shall let each cock bill each other three or more times, but this is not to be so construed that the pitter of a cock has the right to bill with his opponent's cock for the purpose of fatiguing him.

6. No person shall be permitted to handle his fowl after he is fairly delivered in the pit, unless he counts ten, clear and distinct, without either cock making fight; or shall be fast in his adversary, or fast in the carpet, or hung in the web of the pit, or in himself.

7. Any cock that may get on his back, the pitter thereof shall turn him off it, but not take him off the ground he is lying on.

8. When a cock is fast in his adversary, the pitter of the cock the spurs are fast in, shall draw them out; but the pitter of a cock has no right to draw his own spur, except when fast in himself, or in the carpet, or in the web of the pit.

9. When either pitter shall have counted ten tens successively, without the cock refusing to fight, making fight, again breasting them fair on their feet, breast to breast and beak to beak, on the centre score or mark, on the fifth ten being told, and also on the ninth ten being told, shall have won the fight.

10. No pitter, after the cocks have been delivered in the pit, shall be permitted to clean their beaks, or eyes, by

blowing or otherwise, or of squeezing his fowl, or pressing against the floor during the pendency of a fight.

11. When a cock is pounded and no person takes it until the pitter counts twenty twice, and calls three times "Who takes it?" and no person does take it, it is a battle to the cock the odds are on; but the pitter of the pounded cock has the right to have the pound put up, that is, twenty dollars against one; should not this be complied with, then the pitter should go on as if there had been no poundage.

12. If a cock is pounded and the poundage taken, and if the cock the odds are laid against should get up and knock down his adversary, then if the other cock is pounded and the poundage not taken before the pitter counts twenty twice, and calls out "Who takes it?" three times, he wins although there was poundage before.

13. It shall be the duty of the respective pitters to deliver their cocks fair on their feet on the outer mark or score, facing each other, and in a standing position, except on the fifth ten being told; and also on the ninth ten being told, when they shall be placed on the centre score, breast to breast and beak to beak, in like manner. Any pitter being guilty of shoving his fowl across the score, or of pinching him, or using any unfair means for making him fight shall lose the fight.

14. If both cocks fight together, and then if both should refuse until they are counted out, in such a case a fresh cock is to be hoveled and brought into the pit, and the pit-

ters are to toss for which is to set to first; he that wins has the choice; then the one which is to set to last is taken up but not carried out of the pit. The hoveled cock is then to be put down to the other and let fight, whilst the judges, or one of them, shall count twenty and the other in like manner, and if one fight and the other refuse, it is a battle to the fighting cock; but if both fight or both refuse, it is a drawn battle.

15. If both cocks refuse fighting until four, five or more, or less tens are counted, the pitters shall continue their count until one cock has refused ten times; for when a pitter begins to count, he counts for both cocks.

16. If a cock should die before they are counted out, if he fought last he wins the battle; this, however is not to apply when his adversary is running away.

17. The crowing or raising of the hackle is not fight, nor is fighting at the pitters hands.

18. A breaking cock is a fighting cock, but a cock breaking from his adversary is not fight.

19. If any dispute arises between the pitters on the result of a fight, the cocks are not to be taken out of the pit, nor the gaffs taken off until it is decided by the judges or referee.

20. Each cock, within two ounces of each other, shall be a match; except Blinkers when fighting against two-eyed cocks, an allowance of from three to five ounces shall be

made; when Blinkers are matched against each other, the same rule to apply as to two-eyed cocks.

21. All matches shall be fought with heels, round from the socket to the point, not exceeding one and a quarter inches in length, unless otherwise agreed upon. Drop Socket, Cutters, Slashers and twisted heels shall be considered foul.

22. Previous to heeling the cocks, in fighting a main, the four spurs of same pattern and style shall be placed together and the pitters shall toss for the choice of them.

23. In all mains, at the end of each battle, the judges shall order the spurs to be changed, i. e., the spurs of the winning cock on the loser's next fowl, and changed at the end of each battle.

24. Any person fighting a cock heavier than he is represented on the match list, shall lose the fight, although he may have won.

25. In all cases of appeal, fighting ceases until the judge or referee give his decision, which shall be final and strictly to the question before them.

26. When a bet is made, it can not be declared off unless by consent of both parties; all outside bets to go according to the main bet.

27. Each pitter, when delivering his cock on the score, shall take his hands off him as quickly as possible.

28. Any person violating any of the above rules shall be deemed to have lost the match.

Porter